

Washington MERRY-GO-ROUND

By Drew Pearson

WASHINGTON, March 9.

—This may be the most crucial moment in post-war history — a moment when the world could take a tremendous step toward removing the threat of a ruthless military power—a real step toward peace.

It also may be a time when private American citizens, working with Soviet refugees, could accomplish more, and with greater international safety, than the government.

Here are some of the facts to be considered:

1. It is well known that unrest is rampant inside the satellite countries. Purges in Hungary and Czechoslovakia attest this. My own observations at the edge of the Iron Curtain in Berlin last month convince me ferment is more intense than ever before.

2—In the Soviet Union itself, irrespective of satellites, there is also great unrest.

3—The Soviet Union, actually, is a conglomeration of 14 republics which are overwhelmingly non-Russian. Only two republics are predominantly Russian. Nationalism is still strong.

Furthermore, the population of the Soviet Union is 54 percent non-Russian. Here is how Edward O'Connor, Commissioner for Displaced Persons and an expert on European populations, breaks down the different ethnic groups of the Soviet Union.

Ukrainian Soviet Republic Population 42,272,000—91 percent non-Russian.

Byelorussian Soviet Republic—10,585,000—93 percent non-Russian.

Estonian Republic—1,120,000—92 percent non-Russian.

Lithuanian Republic—3,184,000—98 percent non-Russian.

Latvian Republic—1,950,000—98 percent non-Russian.

Moldavian Republic—2,321,000—100 percent non-Russian.

Georgian Republic—3,722,000—100 percent non-Russian.

Armenian Republic—1,346,000—100 percent non-Russian.

Azerbaijan Republic—3,372,000—90 percent non-Russian.

Kazakh Republic—6,458,000—80 percent non-Russian.

Uzbek Republic—6,601,000—94 percent non-Russian.

Turkmen Republic—1,317,000—93 percent non-Russian.

Tadjik Republic—1,560,000—100 percent non-Russian.

Kirghiz Republic—1,533,000—88 percent non-Russian.

In other words, Stalin bit off a somewhat indigestible, heterogeneous empire. And the big

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question is can his successor keep them, plus the restless satellite countries, under control?

For about five years, this columnist has harped on the idea, probably to the boredom of readers, that time is running against the United States and the free world in the cold war.

As a small laboratory test of penetrating the Curtain, this columnist went to the edge of the Czechoslovak border in the Summer of 1951 and, in cooperation with the Crusade for Freedom, launched weather balloons carrying 11,000,000 friendship leaflets to the Czech people.

The results were electrify-

ing. The Prague radio screamed with warnings to the Czech people not to read the leaflets. Naturally, this made the Czechs all the more anxious to read them.

In the end, leaflets were tacked up on telephone poles, even placed on Communist bulletin boards, and surreptitiously mimeographed so that millions of Czechs read them.

That is why—I believe the time may have come, not for any official, psychological warfare by the United States, but for unofficial friendship messages from groups of the American people to show the different groups inside Russia that, if they gave up the warlike ambitions of their masters, they would have real friends in the free world.

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